

Army vol 2.



H I N T S

RESPECTING THE

STATE OF THE CAMP

At ABERDEEN, in 1795.

With some Observations on Encampments
in general;

*And an Appendix, on the ancient Dress of the
SCOTTISH HIGHLANDERS.*

By SIR JOHN SINCLAIR, BART.

COLONEL of the ROTHSAY and CAITHNESS FENCIBLES.

HAVING been sent by his Excellency
Lord Adam Gordon, Commander in
Chief of His Majesty's forces in Scotland,
to take the charge of the camp at Aberdeen,
during the absence of Lieutenant General
Sir Hector Munro, I was thence led, to pay
more particular attention to the situation
of that encampment, than otherwise I
probably should have done, and to draw
up some hints respecting camps in ge-
neral, as connected with the military esta-
blishment of the kingdom.----My thoughts

a

thereon

thereon were hastily thrown together, for the purpose of being submitted in MS. to the consideration of those who have the British army under their immediate direction; but I have since been led to print them, partly that they might be more easily perused by those for whose use they were originally intended, but principally, that I might have an opportunity of publicly recommending the annexed very ingenious, and valuable MEMOIR, written by Mr. SOMERVILLE, the Surgeon of my first battalion, on that important subject, “ The “ Medical Arrangements necessary to be “ observed in Camps.”

On examining the camp at Aberdeen, I found the place pitched upon by the very intelligent officer who had the conduct of that department, (Lieut. Colonel Dirom, Deputy Quarter master General for Scotland) was a situation near the coast, which might protect the town and neighbourhood from insult, and at the same time might be healthy and convenient for the troops.

It

It is certain, that no situation can be found, possessed of every advantage, more especially where cultivated fields must be avoided; it is necessary therefore to chuse that which is liable to the fewest objections. I had the pleasure of finding the camp in question, placed at a proper distance from the town of Aberdeen, (nearly a mile) on a sandy soil, and with an abundant supply of water*.

Among the various particulars, to which the attention of a commanding officer is naturally directed, the diet and health of the men, their clothing, and their tents, are of peculiar importance.

Attention to the diet and health of the soldiers is one of the first duties incumbent on an officer. To enforce cleanliness, and to make them mess regularly, are points extremely material, on which however it is

* The only material objection to the situation seemed to be, two pools of water in the camp, the effluvia of which I was apprehensive might prove detrimental to the health of the men; but I understand that no material inconvenience was felt from that circumstance during the continuance of the encampment.

unnecessary for me to dwell, as the subject is so ably handled by Mr. Somerville, in the following paper. In Highland regiments, it is essential to make the men live better than they are commonly inclined to do. I found that some of the soldiers in my first battalion had actually reduced their strength and almost starved themselves, in order to send money home to their friends; one man in particular, not for his parents, nor for his family, which was very common, but for his sister.

Smoaking tobacco ought to be encouraged, particularly in cold, raw, and damp weather: it has a tendency to prevent infectious diseases; it kills the vermin with which camps are apt to be infested, and it is almost the only way in which warmth can be admitted into a tent. The Dutch pipe however ought to be used, which prevents any risk of fire.

Attention to the dress of a soldier, is extremely material; by which I mean not so much that the dress should be smart and showy, as that it should be warm and convenient.

venient. In that view the usual Highland dress is liable to some objections. I thought it necessary, therefore, in my two battalions of Fencibles, instead of the Philibeg and the belted Plaid, to adopt the *Trews*, which had been formerly worn by the Scottish Highlanders*, and seemed to me particularly convenient for a soldier. Perhaps there is at present too great a diversity of dress in British military establishments, every colonel following his own fancy, particularly in new corps: it might not be amiss therefore, to appoint a board of general officers to consider the subject, and to form some regular plan, not only as to the clothing itself, but also in regard to the manner of its being paid, as it would be infinitely better to have it voted separately, as the Militia is, than mingled with the other accounts. It would be of the utmost consequence also, if the regimental shoes, instead of being supplied by the colonel, were purchased by the men themselves, un-

* See that point more fully treated of in the appendix.

der the inspection of their officers : in the one case a contractor makes them as small as possible, and of very bad materials, so that they neither fit well, nor can they last : and there is nothing more injurious to a soldier on a march, than to have his feet cramped by tight shoes. The stockings should be strong and warm ; and if possible, the men should all be made to wear flannel shirts, particularly in the colder seasons.

The *Bell Tent*, as it is called, seems to be an excellent shape, but there is one improvement in it which it may be worth while attending to. Twelve or fifteen people sleeping in so small a compass must certainly taint and corrupt the air they breathe. To obviate so material an objection, a very experienced officer suggested the idea, of having the top part made like an umbrella, in which there might be holes that would let in fresh air, without being liable to admit water. That however would require some additional expence, and would be apt to go wrong.---Upon thinking of that subject,

subject, however, I am satisfied, that by making holes in the pole of a tent which at the top might be made larger for that purpose, that the same object might be obtained with much greater ease. The pole might be strengthened by iron plates where the holes were made, which would make it as strong as ever. This perhaps is the principal thing wanted, to bring the form of this tent to perfection. It may be observed that very small orifices will be sufficient for the purpose.

In the camp at Aberdeen, I found the soldiers had their beds made of heath, which, when properly constructed, answers well, but is apt to get harsh, and to be destructive to their clothes.

As the construction of tents is a point of great importance to the health of the soldier, it might not be improper, to have various sorts tried under the direction of His Royal Highness the DUKE of YORK, to ascertain the best plan, to be invariably adhered to, when we shall again have occasion for articles of that nature.

As a greater peace establishment must, in all probability, be kept up in these unsettled times, than ever was known before, it will naturally be the wish of the Government of this country, to take the subject fully into consideration, and to procure information from all quarters, respecting the best mode of making that establishment really useful. With that view, the following Hints are, with great deference, suggested:

Camps are undoubtedly the best schools for learning a soldier his duty. Example, emulation, and the more rigid discipline kept up there than in common quarters, are all in favour of encampments. It is therefore to be hoped, were peace to be declared to-morrow, and were it even more likely to be permanent than can at present be looked for, that neither encampments, nor occasionally the assembling of considerable bodies of men together, would be given up.

If such a plan were to be adopted, it is submitted, whether some proper places ought
not

not to be fixed upon in different parts of the kingdom, *and entrenched camps* formed at each. An entrenched and regular camp is in every respect superior to an open one. The men are more under command, they can be more easily prevented from wandering about and plundering the neighbourhood, the ditches will drain the camp, whilst the earthen mound around it not only prevents the tents from being blown down, but also shelters the troops even in the most boisterous weather. Entrenched camps, in the neighbourhood of London, might, perhaps, be so situated as to contribute to the defence of the metropolis, without the possibility of their being made of any service to the enemy.*

If the properest places were fixed upon for such camps, Government might save considerably, by having huts or timber tents erected. It is calculated, that a timber tent

* Entrenched camps might be formed, which it would be difficult for an enemy to take, and which might be of little use to them, if they got them into their possession.

for an officer might be made for only 10l. or 15l. which in canvass costs Government 18l. besides, the former would last for many years, and are greatly superior in point of comfort. And here it is to be observed, that unless it is really necessary, the subjecting troops to hardships, ought as much as possible to be avoided, as it must ultimately be attended with great loss to the public, without the possibility of advantage. Every thing that can contribute to their accommodation cannot be too carefully attended to; for the life of a well trained foldier, particularly in these times, is a loss not so easily repaired as people may imagine. The rearing of each individual is supposed to cost the community from 60l. to 100l. and the additional expence for training a man to be a foldier, must be considerable. Besides when a war is prolonged, it becomes extremely difficult to get them at all.

On this head, it is remarked by the intelligent officer above alluded to, (Lieutenant Colonel Dirom) “ that the discipline of
“ the

“ the army, even in time of peace, would
 “ certainly be greatly promoted by encamp-
 “ ments, and the larger the body collected
 “ in one place, the greater will be the ad-
 “ vantage. Troops encamped for the pur-
 “ poses of discipline, might change their
 “ ground, marching in columns by different
 “ routes. In this manner they would be ac-
 “ customed to the movements which take
 “ place on service, and be in the habit of
 “ moving their baggage, and of striking and
 “ pitching their tents. It would, however,
 “ be much in favour of the health of the
 “ troops, to change their ground frequently
 “ in the course of the Summer, as fixed
 “ camps get dirty and noxious; and can
 “ only be made clean by quitting the
 “ ground for two or three weeks.

“ Entrenched camps would no doubt
 “ be attended with some advantages, as
 “ pointed out above. It is not so clear, (in
 “ Colonel Dirom’s opinion) that it would,
 “ on the whole, be a proper idea to be
 “ adopted, as the defence of the country
 “ must

“ must depend upon the enemy’s plan of
 “ attack, and the troops must be confined
 “ in particular stations. Entrenched camps
 “ with huts or sheds for the men would be
 “ like fortified cantonments, which altho’
 “ comfortable quarters for troops, must be
 “ quitted in case of an invasion, and would
 “ prove strong holds in the hands of an
 “ enemy.”

The plan, however, which I have taken
 the liberty of recommending, does not go
 so far as Colonel Dirom imagines, as en-
 trenching camps might be formed, like those
 described by a great historian* ; in which
 the Roman legions were stationed to protect
 the Empire from the surrounding barba-
 rians, and to the excellence of that system
 the long preservation of that edifice, may,
 in a great measure, be ascribed.

One advantage of permitting entrenched
 camps would be, that the cavalry might
 be put under some kind of shelter, by
 which there would arise a very considerable

* Gibbon, vol. i. p. 25, &c. Edit. 1791.

saving to government. At present, the horses in camp are kept in the open air, exposed to all the variety of the seasons. Their food is also liable to be drenched with rain, and must often be given them in that state. The consequence is, a train of diseases, which cuts off a large proportion of them, in the course of the autumn, or ensuing winter.

Another advantage attending encampments, is, that the troops would thus be more accustomed to artillery than they otherwise would be, and that many of them might be taught the management of guns. Where either men or horses are brought into action, who never heard a cannon before, they are not so likely to encounter an enemy with spirit. Artillery also, is becoming every day of greater importance in war, consequently the greater number of men that can be trained to the management of guns, the better.*

On

* On this subject it may be worth consideration, whether the establishment of first gunners was
not

On the subject of artillery Col. Dirom remarks, that “ it is a great advantage to troops to be accustomed to it, and it is proper that part of the men should be taught the gun exercise. It may be questioned however, if artillery be of so much importance in war, as is generally imagined.---It is always a great burden on an army, and mars many movements that would otherwise be decisive of success. It makes much noise, but is often of little use. It gives the appearance of a hot engagement without much bloodshed. Marshal Saxe, or some other noted General, says “ that you cannot have too much artillery at a siege nor too little in the field.”

These are judicious observations, and could only come from an able and experi-

not a useful regulation. The effect of names and honorary distinctions, whether upon high or low, is well known. Any thing that can excite emulation, and a desire of excelling, ought to be kept up, and it is said, that the establishment above alluded to in the artillery, had a very useful effect.

enced

enced officer. I should think however that for defence, the greater number of guns we had, and of men trained to use them, the more likely we should be to resist any invasion however formidable; an event for which we ought always to be prepared, as it is impossible to say, what the folly, confidence, or despair of an inveterate enemy may lead them to attempt.

As the leading object of our Troops of the Line and the sole purpose for which corps of Fencibles and of Militia have been established, is that of defending the Country, the manœuvres practised at any encampment in these kingdoms ought principally to be for defence. It is questionable therefore, whether the slow and solemn marching of German Troops, ought to be so much in use, as the lively and active motions of the British Light Infantry, which was carried to such perfection during the late American War. Above all, the best mode of defending an inclosed country, such as the greater part of England is, ought in a special manner to be kept in view. For this
island

island ought to trust, not only to its formidable power at Sea but to its strength by Land; and with little attention to its military establishments, it might be enabled to say, that if all the powers of Europe were to invade it, there is a force at home able to repel the attack.

On these observations Col. Dirom remarks, that the German discipline, which
 “ may be considered as the Rudiments of
 “ War, has for its main principle, to do
 “ nothing quicker than it can be done well,
 “ and that a Battalion ought to perform its
 “ Evolutions in the same regular manner,
 “ in which they would be executed by an
 “ army.---When troops have been taught
 “ to move with regularity and precision,
 “ it is no ways difficult to throw them loose,
 “ and make them act in whatever manner
 “ may be best suited to particular circumstances.---The arrangements (he adds)
 “ both by sea and land, ought doubtless to
 “ be such, as to afford little hopes to an
 “ enemy to succeed in an invasion of our
 “ Island; and it is surely far better to pre-
 “ vent

“vent than even to repel an attack.”-----
 The best mode of prevention, however, in my opinion is, not only to have a superior fleet, but a formidable military force, always prepared, to resist the enemy on shore. When every thing that is dear and valuable to a country is at stake, no means of preservation or safety ought to be neglected, and it seems to me probable, that a greater number of men may be trained, with a view to defence merely, than if we also directed our attention to offensive operations.

These hints, with Col. Dirom's judicious observations incorporated with them, are submitted with great deference to the consideration of those more conversant in military matters, from the full conviction, that knowledge of the art of war, like skill in agriculture, can only be brought to perfection, *by uniting the information and experience of great numbers of people*, even of those, who not being trained to war, are likely to view the subject without any military prejudices; and that advantage may

be derived, even from correcting the mistakes into which they may be led, by their zeal for pointing out improvements, and their anxiety to contribute their mite to the defence and safety of their country.

I cannot conclude these cursory observations, without stating it as an opinion, with the justness of which I am deeply impressed, that a thorough knowledge of the art of war, is far from being so easily acquired, as is commonly imagined. Accustomed to business, and to spare no pains in endeavouring to acquire information respecting any subject to which I might be led to direct my attention, I expected that a very short period would be sufficient, to learn all that was necessary for an officer. I found however, that any idea of that sort was extremely ill founded. That a man can no more become a real soldier in a few weeks or months, than thoroughly master, in so short a space, of any other trade. Young men therefore, ought to be regularly trained to war, from an early period of their life, as to any other art. Hence Military academies seem to me
as

as necessary, as universities for law, or medicine, and that we shall never be able to have a sufficient number of skilful officers, or at least to stand in competition in that respect, with the warlike nations on the continent, unless such seminaries as that of Woolwich, are established in different parts of the kingdom, where all the young men destined to defend their country, may have the foundations laid of knowledge in the art of war, previous to their entering into the service.

APPENDIX

ON THE

HIGHLAND DRESS.

IT is not my intention, to dispute, either the genuineness, nor the warlike appearance, of the garb worn by that gallant Corps, the 42d Regiment, and which by many is supposed to be the only true Highland dress. Every foldier must naturally entertain a predilection for the dress of a body of men, so distinguished for military prowess. At the same time, there is every reason to believe, that *the trews*, as worn by the Rothsay and Caithness Fencibles, is not only an ancient part of the dress of the Scottish Highlanders, but rivals the belted plaid in antiquity, as well as in utility and elegance.

In tracing the antiquity of this dress, it is necessary in the first place to ascertain, whether it was worn by the ancient Celtic nations,

tions, from whom the Scottish Highlanders are acknowledged to be descended. As my leisure at present, does not admit of engaging in such researches, I shall take the liberty of quoting modern, rather than ancient authors, but at the same time such as have investigated that subject. The opinion of the celebrated Gibbon* and the authorities he quotes, are on this head extremely important. He states that Tetricus, who had been declared Emperor in Gaul, when led in triumph by Aurelian, was clothed in *Gallic trowsers*, and he remarks in a note, that the use of brachæ, breeches or trowsers, was still considered in Italy, as a Gallic and barbarian fashion. The Romans however had made great advances towards it. To encircle the legs and thighs with *Fasciæ*, or bands, was understood in the time of Pompey and Horace to be a proof of ill health and effeminacy. In the age of Trajan the custom was confined to the rich and luxurious. It gradually was adopted by the mean-

* Gibbon's History, vol. 2. p. 47, octavo edition 1792.

est of the people, in proof of which he refers to a curious note in Casaubon ad Sueton. in August. C. 82.

In fact the trews or trowfers seem to have been a characteristical part of the ancient dress of the Gauls or Celts, and the bare knees to have been a Roman, rather than a Celtic fashion.

Dr. Henry, who has delineated the ancient history of this country with so much diligence and discernment, is decidedly of opinion, that trowfers were a part of the ancient dress, not only of the Celtic nations in general, but of the Scottish Highlanders in particular. “For a considerable time,” says this respectable historian,* “the Antient Britons, and other Celtic nations, had no other garments but their plaids or mantles, which being neither very long nor very broad, left their legs, arms, and some other parts of their bodies, naked. As this defect in their dress could not but be sensibly felt, it was by degrees sup-

* History of Great Britain, vol. 2. p. 341.

“plied.

“ plied. It is indeed uncertain, whether
 “ the tunick or doublet, for covering more
 “ closely the trunk of the body, or breeches
 “ and hose for covering the thighs and
 “ legs, were first invented and used by
 “ these nations; though the limbs being
 “ quite naked, while the trunk was tole-
 “ rably covered by the plaid, it is probable
 “ that these last were most ancient, as they
 “ were most necessary. But however this
 “ may be, it is abundantly evident, from
 “ the testimonies of many ancient authors,
 “ (which have been carefully collected by
 “ the two modern writers quoted below.*)
 “ that the ancient Gauls, Britons, and other
 “ Celtic nations, wore a garment which
 “ covered both their thighs and legs, and
 “ very much resembled our breeches and
 “ stockings united. This garment was
 “ called, in the Celtic tongue, the common
 “ language of all these nations, braxe, or
 “ brace, probably because it was made of

* Pelloutier Hist. Celt. l. 2. c. 6. b. 1. p. 307. &c.
 Cluv. Germ. Antiq. l. 1 c. 16. p. 115. &c.

“ the same party-coloured cloth with their
 “ plaids, as *breac*, in that language signifies
 “ any thing that is party-coloured. These
 “ braxe or close trowfers, which were both
 “ graceful and convenient, and discovered
 “ the fine shape and turn of their limbs to
 “ great advantage, were used by the genu-
 “ ine posterity of the Caledonian Britons
 “ in the Highlands of Scotland till very
 “ lately, and are hardly yet laid aside in
 “ some remote corners of that country.”

The evidence of ancient songs may also be adduced in support of the trews, more especially the well known verses in “ Tak’
 “ your auld Cloak about ye,” from which it would appear, that in the reign of one of the Roberts, probably Robert Bruce, it was a usual part of the dress of the Scots :

“ In days when our King Robert rang,
 “ His *trews* they cost but ha’f a crown,
 “ He said they were a groat ou’r dear,
 “ And ca’d the Taylor thief and loun.”

There

There is a book printed at Paris, anno 1613, intituled “ Les Estats, Empires, et Principautez du Monde,” which thus describes the dress of the ancient Scots. “ Leur bas de chause ne passoient pas le genoüil, et le haut (de chause) estoit de lin, ou de chanure.” In English, “ Their stockings, (or more properly speaking their hose) never passed the knee, and their trowsers were of flax or hemp.” And the engravings of the Scottish dress, in the *Recueil de la diversité des habits qui sont de present en usage, &c.* published at Paris in 12mo. anno 1562, (mentioned in the last edition of Pinkerton’s Scottish Poems, in three volumes octavo, printed anno 1792) prove, that the French, who knew Scotland so intimately, always considered trowsers a part of the Scottish dress. In those engravings, the Lowlander is clothed in loose, and the Highlander in close *trews*.

There is an engraving of James I. of Scotland, in the possession of George Chalmers

mers Esq. of the Board of Trade, in which that monarch is dressed in the close *trews*; and as the picture from whence that engraving was taken, must have been executed in Scotland, there being a view of Dumbarton Castle in it, there is thence every reason to imagine, that it was the dress of that sovereign during his residence in his own kingdom.

In a work, though written many years ago, yet only lately printed, entitled, “The History of the Troubles and Memorable Transactions in Scotland, from the year 1624 to 1645, from the original MS. of John Spalding, then Commissary Clerk of Aberdeen *,” it would appear that the *trews* were very commonly worn at that period.

In the first volume of that work, (p. 39) we are told, that the Laird Balnadalloch, escaping from a twenty days imprisonment,

* In two volumes octavo, printed at Aberdeen, for J. Evans, Paternoster-row, Angus and Son, Aberdeen, and William Creech, Edinburgh, An. 1792.

goes with his coat and *trews*, all rent and worn to the place of Innes, and it would appear (from p. 37) that it was the usual garb he wore, for he had been sitting at supper in it in his own house.

In the second volume (p. 196) the Marquis of Huntley, the most powerful Chieftain in the North, is described as crossing the Spey dressed in a coat and *trews*, with a black bonnet on his head.

In the same volume (p. 232) we are told that the celebrated Marquis of Montrose, coming from England, to commence that successful career which has rendered his name so famous, came secretly to Scotland clad in coat and *trews*.

Traditional evidence is certainly in favour of the point I wish to establish.

A very intelligent officer of the Breadalbane fencibles, Capt. Robinson, informs me, that in Athol the *trews* did not fall into disuse till about the beginning of the present or end of the last century, and that it was not totally discontinued till within the last thirty years.

years. He remembers being told by a very old gentleman of that country, that he recollects the Marquis of Athol mustering all his numerous vassals and tenants at Dunkeld, a great part of whom, and the Marquis himself, were dressed in *trews*. He also remembers being told by an old gentleman present upon the occasion, that when the first Duke of Athol held a court at Loggie-rait, before the abolition of the heritable jurisdictions, the Duke was dressed in a blue bonnet, a short coat, and *trews* of plaiding, the name given to a sort of woollen stuff of the natural colour of the wool.

Captain Robinson, who has paid particular attention to such enquiries, is of opinion, that the *trews* was undoubtedly the ancient dress of people of condition, or of any respectability, both in the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland, it was more especially worn by persons on horseback, often without boots; it was commonly made of a kind of chequered stuff called Tartan, though sometimes of stuff of one colour only.

only. It completely supplied the place of breeches and stockings, covering the feet, the legs, and the thighs. As a winter dress, particularly in time of snow, it was reckoned infinitely preferable to the kilt. When the trews were worn upon a journey, the plaid was carried over the left shoulder, and drawn under the right arm.

In addition to the circumstances above-mentioned, it may be proper to add, that when the wearing of the Highland dress was prohibited by Act 19 George II. c. 39. after the Rebellion in 1745, that the *trews* were included among the other articles enumerated upon that occasion as a part peculiarly belonging to the Highland garb, and consequently is mentioned in the Act 22 George III. c. 63. by which that prohibition was repealed.

These are hints which I thought it right to take this opportunity of throwing together, and preserving, in case the point to which they relate, though a matter of curiosity rather than of real use, should ever become the subject of future discussion.

N. B.

N. B. Some additional information upon this subject, will, I understand, be laid before the public, by Mr. Pinkerton, in one of the Numbers of his Portraits of the illustrious Persons of Scotland.



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